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# THE BRAIN OF THE NAVY

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# THE BRAIN OF THE NAVY

BY  
SPENSER WILKINSON

AUTHOR OF "THE COMMAND OF THE SEA"

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All the Chapters, except the Introduction, have appeared as Papers on "National Defence" in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.



## INTRODUCTION

Come the three corners of the world in arms,  
And we shall shock them ; naught shall make us rue,  
If England to itself do rest but true.

THIS volume, like its predecessor, entitled “The Command of the Sea,” is the outcome of a burning desire that the England which we love, the nation which for three hundred years has been the world’s exemplar, may be prepared to meet threatening dangers. There are many who do not see or who ignore these dangers ; who fancy that we can go on indefinitely making concessions, in matters where we believe the right to be on our side, to France, to Russia, and to

Germany, and yet retain our trade, preserve our Empire, and remain the men we were. A false political doctrine has given a sickly cast even to the word humanity. To my mind humanity is a very different thing from sentimentality. The mawkish introspection and theoretical benevolence of Rousseau led a people saturated with his feelings into the cruelties and the despotism of the Jacobins. The plain manliness of another school produced Nelson's signal at Trafalgar, and the practical response given by the officers and men of his fleet. To my thinking Nelson is a finer man than Rousseau, and represents a higher type of humanity, and England would do more good to the world to-day by upholding what she knows to be right, even if she had to fight for it, than by giving away her self-respect and smothering her spirit for the sake of peace. Sooner or later the reaction will come. We shall have a Ministry forced

—against its will if it resembles any Ministry we have had for the last ten years—to say No to a foreign Power. Then will be laid bare the issue, to which hitherto our leaders have been blind : Which nation is to lead the world ? For two centuries, at least, this primacy among the nations has been England's, and it has rested upon her navy. For ninety years it has been unchallenged, and we have had the benefit of it, though we may truly and proudly say that so long as the British flag has floated supreme over the ocean all nations have been free of its waters and its shores. Our position is now assailed. Hitherto the method has been diplomatic. The experiment is tried of meddling in regions where our interests are paramount, but which we have not formally annexed. In this way our temper is gauged. If we showed plainly that we were not to be trifled with we should receive an apology and

reparation. But we have let it be clearly seen that we are afraid. A war would be a calamity, say our statesmen. Do they imagine that the other Power is eager to bring upon itself the calamity of defeat? The fact is, our statesmen know that the navy and the army are not ready for a life-and-death struggle; they half perceive that every nation in Europe has organized itself so as to be able to throw into a fight the whole of its manhood, and the whole of its wealth. From a conflict demanding such sacrifices they shrink in alarm. Accordingly they speak with reserve about our foreign relations; they make little of the opposition which they experience from other Powers; they represent as trifles the concessions which are extorted from them, concealing as well as they can from their countrymen the fact that they have yielded, and the importance of the interests or the rights they have



abandoned. The leaders, of both parties, make speeches to their followers, from which it might be inferred that England has only one enemy, the party to which the speaker does not belong, and only one help, the party which he represents. Yet neither the speakers nor their hearers quite believe this. The truth is, that there is a theatrical element about party meetings ; the speakers are partly actors, and they are tempted to play to the gallery. But the judicious are not deceived. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Morley respect each other as patriots and as gentlemen ; but it is part of the game that they should abuse one another's views. We all, in our hearts, are in favour of any man who will uplift England, and we care little to which party he belongs. When we enter Westminster Abbey we leave faction behind. We read on Chatham's monument how during his administration " Divine provi-

dence exalted Great Britain," and we forget which party he led. The public, which half sees through the party comedy, is wiser than either side. Thus the efforts made of late years to strengthen the navy have come, not from party, but from the nation; the parties have but followed the national instinct. Yet to administer at the bidding of popular agitation is bad administration, and it is in every way desirable that governments should not follow but lead in regard to their executive action.

The question of the day, which every one sees to be above the region of party, is how the navy is to be made ready for use. In the following pages I have endeavoured to contribute towards the answer to this question. I have made a definite but not by any means an exhaustive proposal; that is, I have tried to explain the nature of a reform which I believe to be necessary, whether other

changes are required or not. Avoiding all technical matters, I have considered merely the nature of the arrangements without which the good management of a war and suitable preparation for war during peace are alike impossible. There must be, if I may use the phrase, a "forethought department," and from it the guidance must come. To repeat a well-worn metaphor, there must be a Brain of the Navy, and it must not be kept in a secondary office, to be consulted or not at the caprice of some other authority, but must itself be the directing power. I believe the reform at the Admiralty, required to create this office and to put it into its right place in the system, is not so sweeping as might appear at first sight, and that little or no destruction is needed.\* But there form is

\* The system which I describe as existing is that set forth in the appendices to the report of Lord Hartington's Commission. I suspect, without having

none the less urgent because it is comparatively simple. No act of Parliament is required. The First Lord of the Admiralty, with the consent of his colleagues in the Cabinet, could introduce the principal necessary changes between breakfast and dinner time. For this reason, in the absence of action on his part, I think the right mode of proceeding is by a resolution in Parliament, and I have begun my exposition with an indication of the general nature of its terms.

the means of knowing, that since that report was published slight modifications in the direction which I advocate have been introduced.

# I

## THE CABINET AND THE NAVY

By the resolution which I contemplate the House of Commons would ask for the name of the officer upon whose judgment the Government relies for the guidance of the navy in war, and for his opinion upon the preparations for which the Navy Estimates make provision, to be submitted to it at the same time as the estimates, this opinion, in case its publication is not thought prudent, to be communicated to a Select Committee of the House, pledged to secrecy, and empowered to examine the officer and to call for all papers relevant to the matter. The exact wording will best be settled by

those Members of Parliament who are interested. The object is to secure that the navy estimates—and the army estimates too, for a similar resolution is needed in regard to the army—shall be framed with a view to the next war, and not merely in pious memory of Nelson and Wellington.

I foresee certain objections which will be raised against these proposals, and I will try to meet them by explaining how the resolution if carried would work.

### THE CABINET SYSTEM.

First of all we shall be told that we are going to lay hands upon the ark of the covenant—the Cabinet system. Perhaps it would be wise to modify even the Cabinet system in order to make the nation and the Empire safe, and Mr. Balfour actually proposes such a modification. But it would

be rash to disturb the existing system of government, at any rate until everything else has been tried. Let us see exactly what the Cabinet system is. The most authoritative accounts are contained in an essay published many years ago by Mr. Gladstone, and in the seventh chapter of Mr. Morley's "Walpole." These are judicial statements of the theory and practice as it is, and having been accepted without qualification may be taken as absolutely safe guides.

The Cabinet is a committee of politicians, all belonging to one party, chosen by the Prime Minister, and assigned by him to their respective offices. In that committee is vested the whole executive power. The Cabinet is a despot, and can do as it pleases, subject to one check—it can be deposed by a vote of the House of Commons. So long as it satisfies the majority of the House of

Commons the Cabinet is supreme. When we say the Cabinet is responsible we mean that a vote in the House of Commons can upset it, and we mean nothing else. There is no other responsibility. No individual Minister is responsible for anything, because the whole Cabinet stands or falls together. "The first mark of the Cabinet," says Mr. Morley, "is united and indivisible responsibility." The First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War represent towards the navy and the army the authority of the Cabinet, because they are the fingers with which the Cabinet plays on these two particular keys of the administrative piano. But the House of Commons cannot bring either of them to book. If it censures either of them, out goes the whole Cabinet. Thus the Ministers who are nominally responsible for the navy and the army are, in fact, not responsible at all,



except to their consciences and their colleagues in the Cabinet.

This is the system, which secures perfectly the object for which it was devised, the absolute power of the Cabinet, so long as it is not turned out. The essence of government is a single strong authority, and the object of representative government is to put that authority into the hands of a body which has the confidence of the majority. Below the Cabinet there are in each office a number of specialists, men whose whole life is given to the business of that office, and who know the subject with which they have to deal. The Cabinet, of which all the members are amateurs, can over-rule the judgment of any of these professionals. That is quite right. The Cabinet has to answer to the House of Commons for what it decides, and therefore it must decide according to the judgment of its own members. But on

all professional matters it needs professional advice, to be taken or left as its members think best, but to be heard.

At present, however, it cannot possibly get professional advice about the next war, or, if you prefer the phrase, about plans of campaign. What is the essence of professional advice? That the man who gives it devotes his life to the subject on which he advises. A physician's opinion on disease, a surgeon's on an injury, a conveyancer's on title, or a criminal lawyer's on a defence—these are professional opinions. But a physician will not give you a professional opinion on a surgical case, nor a criminal lawyer upon title; he will not take your fee for it, but will tell you it is not his branch, and he does not do amateur work.

Now there is not at the War Office or at the Admiralty any man in authority whose duty it is to study the next war and make

plans of campaign. There are admirals at the one and generals at the other, and they are all busy men, each with his work cut out for him. They haven't time if they wanted to study the next war, and their opinion, if they gave it, would be guarded. They would have some idea on the subject. But if you asked one of them to write down on paper his views of the next war and to put his name to it and stake his reputation upon it he would ask for time to study the subject. My proposal is simply to make at the Admiralty and at the War Office a department for plans of campaign, with an officer at the head of it charged with plans of campaign, and with nothing else that would interfere with his preparing them. He would, of course, annex to his department the existing intelligence branch which collects the materials out of which such plans are made. This will not interfere with

the Cabinet. It will give them the very information they want in discussing the estimates. They will reject any suggestions that do not seem sensible and accept all those that accord with common sense. There is nothing in this to conceal from the House of Commons. If the estimates are large the Cabinet will be glad to be able to call upon its adviser to show why they must be so large; if they are small they will be equally glad to have a first-rate opinion to show that the nation will still be safe. The House of Commons, it must be remembered, always has a majority in favour of the Cabinet.

Compare this proposal with one that was made by Mr. Balfour. He suggested that the estimates should be considered by a committee of the Cabinet, of which the Prime Minister should be chairman. That would very greatly modify the Cabinet system; for, while it would increase the

authority of the Prime Minister (who would have a committee of his own making, for he always, in the formation of the Cabinet, selects his colleagues and assigns to them their offices), it would undermine the collective responsibility of the Cabinet ; for in the long run the members not on the committee could not share the responsibility for measures over which they had no share of the control. It is a tempting scheme to a leader like Mr. Balfour, who may fairly expect to be Prime Minister ; but how in the world does it bring the Cabinet face to face with the conditions of the next war ? The proposal shows that Mr. Balfour, in his thoughts of naval and military reform, has, like all the other politicians upon both front benches, an eye to everything that can be considered, save and except war. But the one thing to be principally considered is war.

## A PROFESSIONAL ADVISER.

Whenever there is a war the Cabinet will have to manage it. You cannot alter that, do what you will, and it would be a misfortune if you could. The most dreadful perversion of government is that which places the supreme power in the State in the hands of a military authority. It becomes necessary when the civil supreme power breaks down by inability to conduct a war ; for the nation has to be defended, and rather than submit to conquest it must submit to a military despotism. Every lover of good government must therefore wish to see the Cabinet put into a position to conduct a war properly. Now there is only one known way in which this can be done.

You must give the Cabinet a professional adviser on the subject of war. As regards war, the Cabinet is a committee, not of

amateurs, but of mere outsiders. An amateur is a man who studies something, not for his living, but for his pleasure. He may be very well up in his subject. But there is not in the Cabinet a single man who could stake his reputation on commanding an iron-clad or a brigade in a battle, or whose name would secure consideration among competent judges for his opinion on a point of strategy. The Cabinet has something higher and harder to do than the strategist. It has to take upon itself the immeasurable responsibility (immeasurable in a moral sense, though in practice strictly limited to the chance of being turned out) for the great decisions in peace and war upon which the nation's fate depends. It is the real and only commander-in-chief of the army and the navy. And it is impossible for the Cabinet to escape from this position. It cannot delegate its responsibility to any one.

Your committee may resign, but you will have to find another to take up its authority and its responsibility. Now what does a commander-in-chief do, if he is a wise man, when he knows that he is not himself a great general, even though he may be, what the Cabinet never is, a very good amateur? Let us hear upon this point what the competent man has to say. Here is what Moltke wrote on the subject in 1859 :—

There are generals who need no counsel, who deliberate and resolve in their own minds, those about them having only to carry out their intentions. But such generals are stars of the first magnitude who scarcely appear once in a century. In the great majority of cases the director of an army will not be willing to dispense with advice. The suggestions made may very well be the result of the deliberations of a smaller or greater number of men specially qualified by training and experience to form a correct judgment. But even among them only one opinion ought to assert itself. The organization of the military hierarchy should promote subordination even in thought. This one opinion only should be submitted



for the consideration of the commander-in-chief by the one person to whom this particular service is assigned. Him let the general choose, not according to rank or seniority, but in accordance with his own personal confidence. Though the advice given may not always be unconditionally the best, yet, if the action taken be consistent and the leading idea once adopted be steadfastly followed, the affair may always be brought to a satisfactory issue. The commander-in-chief retains as against his adviser the infinitely weightier merit of taking upon himself the responsibility for all that is done. But surround a commander with a number of independent men—the more numerous, the more distinguished, the abler they are, and the worse it will be—let him hear the advice now of one, now of another; let him carry out up to a certain point a measure judicious in itself, then adopt a still more judicious but different plan, and then be convinced by the thoroughly sound objections of a third adviser and the remedial suggestions of a fourth—it is a hundred to one that, though for each of his measures excellent reasons can be given, he will lose the campaign.

This is the best exposition ever written of the right way for an authority not in itself possessed of the specific insight required for the management of war. Now for the

practice. King William I. of Prussia was such an authority. He knew more about war than any Cabinet, for he was, if not a professional, at least a first-class amateur. But he chose the best adviser he could find and invariably backed him, even against his own judgment. Here again we must take Moltke's account. It is contained in a conversation reported by Count Bethusy-Huc (Moltke, *Gesammelte Schriften*, V. 298-9), which I had better translate :—

At that time (about 1885) a legend was in circulation, not only in society talk, but in the press, which, though apparently to the Field-Marshal's credit, was really distasteful to him. The story was that on the evening of the battle of Gravelotte King William asked his Chief of the Staff what was to be done if the enemy still held his position next morning. Moltke was said to have answered, "Attack him again, your Majesty," and when the King replied that after the heavy losses he could not bring himself to agree to that, Moltke was said to have added, "In that case I should beg leave to resign." I was rightly in doubt,

says Count Bethusy-Huc, about the genuineness of this legend, and when in confidence I asked the Field-Marshal about it he declared it from beginning to end an invention, without the slightest justification in anything that took place on that evening. He added: "I should never have left my King in the lurch like that, least of all during war, in face of the enemy. It would be contrary both to discipline and to military honour. But such legends might have arisen, by misunderstanding, from something that did happen more than once in both wars. The King, who, as you know, thoroughly studied all my plans before they were carried out, had a very sharp eye, far keener than either the public or the army knew, for any weak points in them, and sometimes insisted very strongly that they should be modified to meet his objections, which in themselves were justified. That was not always possible, at least, not for me. There are in war many situations in which it is quite impossible to make a plan without a weak point, and in which you must necessarily rely to some extent upon good luck and the bravery of your troops. On such occasions, when the King could not be induced to let fall his theoretical objections, I more than once had to say, 'Then your Majesty must be so gracious as to give your own orders. My wisdom is at an end; I can suggest no other course.' This declaration invariably led to the approval of my plan."

These quotations will speak for themselves. What we have to do is to provide the Cabinet, or make it provide itself, with a naval Moltke.

## II

### A GENERAL STAFF

WHAT we have to do is to provide the Cabinet, or to make it provide itself, with a naval Moltke. In order to see precisely what this means we must find out the exact nature of Moltke's work. An army has to be recruited, clothed, fed, armed, paid, and kept in order. To do all this is a great business, as difficult and as complicated as the management of the North-Western Railway. In war the movements against the enemy need to be directed by some one who understands the art of winning victories; but all the time the

whole mass of men must be kept supplied with clothes, boots, food, arms, ammunition, and money.

The two functions of directing the movements so as to secure victories, and of managing the great business concern have little in common. A man may be good at the one without being equally good at the other; and to perform either task is quite enough for one man. The Prussian system is based on this distinction. They long ago made a special department in the army for directing movements against an enemy, and this department has its branches all through the army. A general commanding an army corps, for example, has to superintend the management of his corps in business matters, as well as to direct its movements in the field. He must to some extent work in both departments. But his assistants are distinctly classified; he has one office for

business pure and simple ; another for military routine ; and a special office called his “ general staff,” for movements against the enemy, or, as it might be described, for tactics and strategy.

At the headquarters of the Prussian army there are two great departments, one for business and military routine, presided over by a general, called the “ Minister of War,” and another for tactics and strategy, the management of battles and campaigns, called the Great General Staff. Moltke was at the head of this latter office. His principal work was during peace always to study the next war and be ready with his arrangements for directing the armies, and during war to carry out these arrangements. A second task which he never neglected was the training and testing of the members of his department. He was the teacher of generalship for the army, and, while the

annual manœuvres were the practical examinations for the generals commanding divisions and army corps, the Great General Staff at Berlin was a sort of university where Moltke taught the elements of generalship and more than the elements to a class of picked young officers.

We must be very careful not to be misled by Moltke's official title, "Chief of the General Staff of the Army." It looks at first sight as though he were merely the assistant of a higher general, just as the chief of the staff of an army corps is the assistant or private secretary for strategy and tactics, or marches and battles, of the general commanding the army corps. But Moltke was the head of the battles and campaigns department; he was the head general, with no one above him but the King, and the King, as I showed in my last article, invariably backed him up. There



was no one between Moltke and the King, who in both his great wars always approved of the orders which Moltke gave for the movement and action of the armies, and, so far as we know, never even consulted any one else on the subject.

What we want for the defence of Great Britain is in each of the two services, the navy and the army, a department for campaigns and battles, for preparing, as Moltke prepared, for the next war, for directing it when it comes, and all the time for training and testing admirals or generals. As the heads of these two departments we want the best naval strategist and the best military strategist in the service; and we want no one whatever to stand between either of these men and the Cabinet. Of course, when I say the Cabinet, I mean for this purpose the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War. Each of

these Ministers is the Cabinet to the service over which he presides; when he says "yea" and "nay" it is the Cabinet that speaks through him. If you have a first-rate strategist, with an office of picked and trained officers as assistants, to work out the arrangements for a possible war, it would evidently be absurd to put another man as a buffer or a telephone between him and the Cabinet which needs his advice.

### THE EXPERTS AGREED.

As far as I know, all the experts are unanimous in holding that we must have for each service an officer entrusted with the functions I have described. There are differences of opinion between experts as to what else the officer should do. But there is entire agreement that there must be a strategical adviser, a battles and campaigns

adviser, or a next war adviser for the Cabinet, and that his duty must be to advise the Cabinet, not to advise somebody else to advise the Cabinet. The disputed points are all really of minor importance. They turn on how certain other duties should be performed. There is, for example, what I have called the business management of the army—that is, its maintenance and supplying with necessaries. The prevalent opinion, I think I may say the better opinion, would assign this not to the strategical adviser but to a general selected as a military administrator. Then there is the promotion and appointment of officers. Various views are taken of the best way of performing these delicate but important tasks. We need not go into these differences. You cannot pull to pieces and put together again all of a sudden great offices like the War Office and the Admiralty. But we can say, here is a

plain and palpable gap. There is no great head of a strategical department to advise the Cabinet, and under its authority to direct in war the movements of fleets or armies. We can reasonably urge the appointment of such advisers, and let the other questions be settled later; they will be better settled when the strategists are there to be heard on the subject of the requirements of war.

#### AN ADVISER AT WORK.

Suppose now we go back to Moltke and look a little at how he worked. In 1862 Moltke had been five years in his post. There was a quarrel brewing with Denmark, which early in 1864 became a war. Towards the close of 1862 Moltke received a note from his colleague, Roon (the military business man or administrator), asking whether he had considered the case of a

war with Denmark. Certainly, replies Moltke, that eventuality has been kept in view in this office ; and then he explains the war in a remarkable letter, which is too long to reproduce in full, but of which the gist may be given :—

As Prussia has not the sea power which would enable us to go to Copenhagen and dictate a peace there, the war will not be easy to end. The best way is to begin by bagging the Danish army ; you mustn't beat it and let it run away, but induce it to stop and be captured. Failing that you will have to occupy the whole Danish mainland—best done when the waters are frozen. Here is the exact account of the Danish army. In order to deal with it you will require 62,000 men, 192 field guns, and two or three dozen siege guns. Enclosed is the programme for the first act.

Here, then, we see the administrator told by the strategist more than a year in advance exactly what his administration will have to expect. It is well known that

the memorandum upon which the opening moves of the Germans in the war of 1870 were based had been drawn up by Moltke two years beforehand, and that it was an estimate of the French army, which proved remarkably accurate, and an analysis of the various moves open to the French commander, followed by the outline of the best positions in which the German armies could be put at the start in order to deal with any of the possible French moves. We do not yet know fully the previous history of the war of 1866, but the way in which Moltke played his game on that occasion proved that he had analyzed it more perfectly before it began than most of the critics have been able to do until this day. He had to fight Austria and nearly all the States of Germany, and he had calculated to a nicety what troops each of them would put into the field; and told off his own forces so as

to be ready to hit hardest the biggest of his foes. In three weeks from the declaration of war the hostile armies were all either running away or captured.

These accurate estimates of the enemies' forces were rendered possible by the working of a thoroughly organized intelligence department. The wise forecasts of what the enemies would do with their forces and the judicious moves which Moltke arranged against them were all his own. They were possible to him because he had worked all his life at strategy and tactics; he had been a quarter of a century in the department before he became its head, and he was chosen for that post not for seniority (he was a junior major-general at the time), but because his great ability as a strategist was recognized by those who had the choice. In each of the English services we have an intelligence branch, but there is no strategy

department to make use of the data thus supplied, no head strategist to train younger ones in his department, and no set of officers of five-and-twenty years' record in such a department to pick from. We cannot, in these circumstances, expect to get such a brilliant specialist as Moltke; but if we can induce the Cabinet to select the best strategist it can find, and to give him his work, he will begin to specialize himself and to train others; and then in a few years we shall have at least the beginnings of a school of generals and a school of admirals. When the first pair of strategical advisers have finished their careers there will be a number of men among those who have worked under them better prepared than they were to take up the work.



### III

## THE BOARD OF ADMIRALTY

THE Board of Admiralty is a legal fiction. When there is a change of Government half a dozen gentlemen are appointed under the Queen's patent to be "Commissioners for Executing the Office of High Admiral." Four of them are naval officers, and of the other two, who are civilians, one is a member of the Cabinet, and the other a gentleman chosen for his mechanical and engineering knowledge and experience. These six gentlemen are the Lords of the Admiralty, and, as they meet together once a week, may

perhaps be said to form a board. But the Board does not administer the navy. The navy is managed under Orders in Council, which vest the whole authority in the Cabinet Minister called the First Lord. The Board decides nothing; no vote is ever taken at its meetings; the First Lord decides everything. The other lords are his subordinates, and the business of the navy is divided between them, nominally at the discretion of the First Lord, but really according to a traditional distribution. The first, second, and fourth sea lords are supposed between them to have charge of the *personnel*, and the third sea lord (called the Controller) of the *matériel* of the navy; but beyond this rough rule the distribution of business appears to be based upon no system. Appointments of admirals and captains are made by the civilian First Lord; those of commanders by the first sea lord; those of lieutenants

and midshipmen by the second sea lord, and those of medical officers, paymasters, and clerks by the fourth sea lord. This is a sample of the system. Each lord has under his charge some dozen items selected almost at random, the important matters going to the senior and those less attractive to the juniors. In short, there is not, except as regards the rough distinction between *personnel* and *matériel*, any departmental organization, any principle of classification of authority and responsibility according to subjects. Indeed, it would seem that each sea lord, according to his rank, has a share in each subject. Moreover, opinions are divided upon the duties inherent in the position of a naval lord, some holding that each naval lord has a duty to say whether he thinks the navy strong enough, while others declare that a naval lord has no such duty. Some of the admirals cling to the name of

the Board, and maintain that all the lords, being commissioners, are "co-equal," but the practice of many years hardly bears out this view.

The fact is that since the Lord High Admiral was cut up into several lords the authority of the Cabinet has been consolidated, and the navy is now as absolutely governed by a Cabinet Minister as the Post Office or the Treasury. But while for sixty years the First Lord has been mainly occupied in acquiring this absolute power, and in merging in his "Board" the minor boards which once attended to the *matériel* of the navy, the sea lords have clung to the tradition that they are fragments of a High Admiral and have shrunk from becoming heads of departments.

## DEVELOPMENT NOT REVOLUTION.

No one but a dreamer will think of wishing to go back upon the development of generations. The Cabinet is now the corner-stone of our system of government, and therefore we must accept as the starting-point of any method of naval administration the omnipotent Cabinet Minister. The board of equals is dead and should be buried, and a departmental organization is inevitable. The only question really open to discussion concerns the principles upon which the work is to be divided. To elaborate the division in detail must be the work of experts. The public can only insist that a rational intelligible principle of classification shall be adopted.

My object has been to set forth such a principle, to dwell upon the distinction

between the function of a commander or director of movements in war and all the various functions of supply. Without going into the details of other possible departments, it is easy to see that the chief department of any fighting organization must be that which designs and directs the fight. I therefore suggest that the duties of military design and direction, with all that properly belongs to them, ought to be grouped into one department, at the head of which should be placed an admiral selected for his strategical power; that is, for his capacity as a war commander and director for the whole navy. This admiral would be responsible in peace and war for the composition and distribution of fleets, for the military orders given to their commanders, and for the selection of strategical points for naval bases and coaling stations. These are the constituent parts of any plan of campaign, and the admiral-

commander would therefore keep under his own supervision the office that watches the navies of foreign Powers and studies the progress of the art of naval war—the existing Intelligence Branch, strengthened and enlarged.

It seems to me reasonable for the public to insist upon a rational distribution of the business done at the Admiralty, and to demand that in this distribution the purpose of the whole organization, victory in war, shall be kept in view. This will be secured if a department for the military direction of the navy be constituted and its formation made the starting-point of the new development of the Admiralty. The creation of one department implies the creation of another or of others, for you can hardly begin sorting the business upon a sound principle without carrying the process through. But we need not follow out the arrangement,

nor attempt to prescribe for the other departments, because the principle here adopted carries with it a rational view of the whole work. If we dwell on the one essential we may succeed in carrying it, but if we go into minor details we shall only be liable to lose sight of the main point.

#### A STRONG CASE FOR REFORM.

Before going further it may be well to show that my proposal has behind it the greatest possible weight of authority. In 1883 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the civil and professional administration of the navy and the army, and their relation to each other and to the Treasury. This body, known as the Hartington Commission, reported in 1889 upon the administration of the navy, and recommended—



1. That the supreme authority of the First Lord (the Cabinet Minister) should be accepted as the basis of the whole system.

2. That the First Sea Lord should be the constituted adviser of the Cabinet in "all great questions of naval policy."

3. A departmental grouping of the business.

4. That the heads of departments should, from time to time, meet for consultation under the presidency of the Cabinet Minister.

I have given these suggestions in my own words because in the report phrases are used which involve controversial points of constitutional law, to which I shall revert later, but with which I do not wish now to cumber my exposition. The only ambiguity of immediate importance is contained in the words "all great questions of naval policy." But in the body of the report these questions are defined and set forth. They are : "Such questions as the distribution of the fleet in time of peace or war; the relative

strength of our own and foreign navies ; the duties required of the navy in the defence of our commerce and possessions ; the number, class and type of ships of war to be maintained or provided ; the regulation with the War Department of all questions in which joint action or a definite understanding is required." The report from which I am quoting was signed by the Duke of Devonshire (then Lord Hartington), Lord Randolph Churchill, Lord Revelstoke, the late Mr. W. H. Smith, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Richard Temple, Admiral Sir Frederick Richards, General Brackenbury, and Mr. Ismay. With the passage I have quoted they all agreed, for though several of them dissented from points in the report, their differences did not touch this point. Sir Richard Temple objected to a particular use of the term chief of the staff ; Sir Frederick Richards, who clung to the old theory of

coequal lords at the Board, held that every sea lord should be required as a duty to record his opinion as to what the strength of the fleet should be. General Brackenbury and Mr. Ismay dissented in matters not connected with my present subject; and Lord Randolph Churchill had a complete scheme of his own, which he would have preferred to that of the majority of the Commission. Thus, then, I am entitled to quote the Hartington Commission in support of the redistribution of business upon departmental lines, and of the constitution of the First Sea Lord's office into that of a strategy department or war-directing department, or department for advising the Cabinet in regard to the conduct of war when it comes, and the preparations for it during peace.

It should be noted that a departmental organization is inconsistent with the practice

of changing the Lords of the Admiralty at every change of Government, and the Hartington Commission recommended "that the naval lords should be appointed for a definite period." There is, I believe, almost entire unanimity among all who have thought about naval administration upon this point.

If, as the official reports declare, the distribution of business rests with the First Lord of the Admiralty, and if there is really no doubt among the experts that such a redistribution as I have described is the fundamental reform required, the question arises, Why has this reform not been already carried out? The report of Lord Hartington's Commission was issued early in 1890. Lord George Hamilton and Lord Spencer are presumably both familiar with it. But, so far as we know, it remains a dead letter. This fact alone is full and complete justification of

the suggestion which I ventured to make for an organization of voters and of the Navy League which has since been formed.

The reason why successive First Lords have shrunk from performing their most obvious and urgent duty is probably to be found in the dual nature of the report of the Hartington Commission. That body discussed not only the navy but the army, and its proposals for the army, in themselves not based upon sound principles, were opposed, not only by many of those who have the efficiency of the army at heart, but also by the powerful interests which resist any reform whatever in the army. To escape collision with this obstructive force and to avoid being committed to the very dubious theories of the Hartington Commission in regard to army management it is desirable that those who are determined to secure the safety of the Empire should concentrate their atten-

tion upon the management of the navy until such time as they shall have attained their object, the maintenance of our naval forces according to a rational design founded upon a consideration of the duties it must perform in war.

## IV

### LORD HARTINGTON'S COMMISSION

I HAVE quoted the Hartington Commission in support of my main contention, the need of the Cabinet for competent advice about the next war. But I am far from endorsing the Commission's report as a whole. It is valuable as a rough and imperfect reflection of the wishes and judgments of the naval and military experts. But it is made up of compromises, and on some matters of vital moment it manages to conceal the truth. These are, as a rule, the marks of the report of a Parliamentary Committee in which a body composed of laymen take the evidence

of a number of experts. The laymen never have the grasp of the subject which would enable them to ask questions rightly, and the experts rarely have the chance of putting in their own way what they consider the essential point. The consequence usually is that the report is little more than a rough approximation to the truth. A better plan would be in most cases for the Cabinet to select the best expert and to empower him to draw up a report, after consultation with as many other experts as he thought desirable. His report might then with advantage be put before a committee of laymen to decide whether its suggestions were or were not in accordance with reason and common sense.

#### A COMMISSION OF POLITICIANS.

In the Hartington Commission the principal members were politicians of Cabinet



rank, and though an admiral and a general were associated with them, the report is written from the point of view of the ordinary Cabinet politician. The great preoccupation is to find out how to make the department work smoothly, so that the Cabinet Minister at its head shall have an easy berth. The relations between the Admiralty and the War Office, and between the First Lord and the Sea Lords, are freely discussed; but the relation between the navy and war is hardly mentioned. None of the distinguished politicians seems to have quite realized that reforms at the Admiralty are mere rubbish unless their object is to get the Admiralty and the navy ready for war. But they were all keenly alive to the wisdom, from their own point of view, of putting more power into the hands of a Cabinet Minister. In attempting this, however, they used very strange language—language which cannot be

reconciled with the elementary known facts. The first recommendation of the report, in its own words, is : “ Full recognition of the complete and individual responsibility to Parliament and the country of the Cabinet Minister at the head of that Department for all matters connected with your Majesty’s navy.” There is a flat contradiction between these words and what the authors of the report intended to convey by them.

### WHAT DID THEY MEAN ?

The Commission wanted to establish the absolute, unquestioned authority of the First Lord of the Admiralty over every part of the management of the navy, and to make an end once for all of the fiction of a board of equals. As I have already said, I share this desire. But the words used in the report mean something quite different. They mean

nothing less than the abolition of the Cabinet. The foundation of Cabinet government is collective responsibility. If the House of Commons objects to anything that has been done in any department it must turn out the whole Cabinet, and it has no other remedy. To establish the "individual responsibility" of a Cabinet Minister for his acts would be to upset this system, and to invite the House of Commons to turn out a single Minister while leaving the rest of the Cabinet untouched. It is obvious that this is not what the Commission proposed.

Again, they talk of "responsibility to Parliament and the country." But there is no way in which the country can call a Cabinet to account except through Parliament, and the distinction between responsibility to Parliament and responsibility to the country is fictitious. The Cabinet is responsible to the Queen and to Parliament. I

have in a previous chapter dwelt upon these points and reminded my readers of the fact that no individual Minister has any actual responsibility for anything; he cannot be called to account at all. If therefore the Commission had been accurate they would have asked for the recognition of the "complete irresponsibility" of the Cabinet Minister. The truth is, and it cannot be too plainly and forcibly put, that our public men have grown into the dangerous habit of misusing words. A Minister who takes upon himself to do an arbitrary act is prone to declare that he makes himself "responsible" for it. But what he means is that he has authority to do it. He knows perfectly well that he is safe, because Parliament will not go to the inconvenience, over a departmental detail, of turning out the Government and bringing on a dissolution. It is one of the tricks of the political trade to say "respon-

sibility ” when you mean “ power ” or “ authority,” and the report of the Hartington Commission is brimful of juggling with “ responsibility.’

### PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Thus, in discussing the army, the report lays down a general principle applicable to both services. It says : “ The responsibility which devolves on the parliamentary head of the department ” (namely, the First Lord of the Admiralty, or the Secretary of State for War) “ is so vast, that it becomes specially important that the holder should be able to count upon the best professional advice available, tendered under conditions of the greatest responsibility possible.” In this sentence there are two “ responsibilities.” The “ vast responsibility ” of the parliamentary chief, or Cabinet Minister, is, as has been shown, a mere fiction. In this

case the appropriate word is "authority," and it might be well that we should realize how great is the authority entrusted to a Cabinet Minister, and how difficult it is in ordinary times to enforce upon him anything that can be called responsibility for its exercise. But when the Commission speaks of professional advice "tendered under conditions of the greatest responsibility possible," I venture to doubt whether they themselves attached any meaning whatever to their formula.

It is sometimes a temptation, especially if you are in a difficulty, to use words that sound well. On one occasion, when I was in the hands of the Austrian authorities in Galicia—who, as I afterwards learned, imagined me to be a Russian officer—I dictated at the close of the protocol recording my examination some German words conveying a demand to be treated as became

my rank. I had no idea what the demand involved, and was disagreeably surprised when it led to an offer to liberate me on parole—that is, to let me loose upon a populace which had been informed that I was a spy.

Lord Hartington's Commission was not under arrest and had not to face the politely but firmly expressed promise of execution at an early date, but they yielded to the temptations of a phrase. The "conditions of responsibility" under which advice can be tendered must be that the adviser is responsible either for the advice which he gives or for something else. Every man who gives advice is responsible for it, unless he conveys it in an anonymous letter or article, and his responsibility consists in the fact that he stakes his reputation upon it. You cannot punish an adviser as such, least of all a professional adviser. A doctor does the best

he can for your sick relative, but if the patient dies you cannot attack the doctor, except, of course, in case of gross and culpable negligence, which need not now concern us. You take counsel's opinion on your case, but if, when it comes into court, the judgment is an opinion diametrically opposite to that for which you paid your fee, you have no remedy, and for a good reason. If you could punish a barrister or a doctor for his advice there would be no barristers and n physicians. The real safeguard is that a barrister who gives bad opinions or a physician who mistakes his cases ends with losing his reputation and his practice, if he ever had any. And this risk is enough. It suffices to keep at the highest pitch the standard of professional opinions. The barrister and the physician are exceedingly careful and accurate because they value, above all things, their professional standing.



In short, the "condition of the greatest responsibility possible" for advice upon a professional subject is simply that the opinion shall be signed with the writer's name, and shall be liable to publication.

There is, however, a different condition affecting, not the possibility of punishing the adviser, but the actual value of his advice. The judgment of a professional man derives its value, to a great extent, from his practice. You do not when your child is ill or your firm is threatened with an action consult a physician who has no patients or a counsel without briefs. Such an unemployed expert may indeed be the profoundest master of the theory of his art or science, but his judgment on the conduct of a particular case would be accepted with reserve.

Knowledge alone is not of itself sufficient for the conduct of practical affairs. Successful action, and especially successful manage-

ment or direction, requires the exercise of a faculty not necessarily acquired from theoretical study, the faculty of seeing what is the right thing to do in complicated circumstances. Indispensable as the professional knowledge and the command of science or theory certainly are, yet in action the master quality is more akin to common sense than to science. It involves a cool, clear head, and the power of taking in a situation, and the man whose judgment is to be trusted in an emergency requires balance. This quality, so far as it can be acquired at all, is acquired not in the study but in action; it is developed by responsibility in the true sense of the word—that is, by the obligation to decide important practical issues, coupled with the certainty of being called to account for failure. The man who has been trained to such responsibility and who lives in it is the man whose advice carries weight—at

least, in regard to the kind of business for which he has been and is thus responsible.

### A DESK-GENERAL.

It is clear, then, that "advice tendered under conditions of the greatest responsibility possible" must in the first place not be anonymous, but must involve the reputation of its giver; and, secondly, that its intrinsic value depends on the degree in which the adviser is accustomed to wield authority and to answer for its proper exercise in that department of life in regard to which he is consulted.

Lord Hartington's Commission quite forgot the second, and by far the more vital, element of these conditions. They seriously proposed to appoint a "military adviser" who should have nothing in the world to do but give advice. They wanted

“a special department of the Chief of the Staff, freed from all executive functions” (that is, in English, with nothing to do), and “charged with the responsible duty” (that is, I suppose, the important duty) “of preparing plans for military operations, collecting and co-ordinating information of all kinds, and generally tendering advice upon all matters of organization and the preparation of the army for war.” The officer to whom these duties were to be entrusted was to have nothing whatever to do with commanding, inspecting, or training the army, nor with the maintenance of its discipline. But he was to plan its campaigns and to advise the Secretary of State at every turn.

To the creation of an office like this, and to the appointment of an adviser under these conditions, there are two insurmountable objections. First of all, by shutting your

general up at his desk, and separating him from the army, you cut him off from the exercise of the very powers in virtue of which you value his judgment; you want a director of armies to assist you with his judgment, and at the same time that you are going to rely on his faculties you forbid him to exercise them. A more absurd contrivance it would be impossible to devise. Secondly, the whole scheme is based upon excluding the idea of war. The Commission proposed to create two commanders of the army, one for discipline, training, and education, and the other for executive command and inspection; neither of them was to have a word to say about plans of campaign, which were to be entirely in the hands of the desk-general. It does not seem to have occurred to them that this division must break down as soon as war comes in sight, for then there must be a

war director with authority. Which of the three did the Commission mean to put in command for war? The desk-general who has lost the habit of command while studying his plans, the inspecting-general who is not thought good enough either to make plans or to train the army, or the training general who looks after discipline, though he is allowed neither to make plans nor to command troops?

### THE COMMON SENSE OF THE NAVY.

I think, then, that in regard to the army Lord Hartington's Commission departed from common sense, and need not be followed. But in regard to the navy it was preserved from these vagaries. After enumerating the points which together make up the design or standard of preparation for war, and upon which the civilian

Minister needs competent advice, the commissioners say that they would have been disposed to think these "consultative duties" quite enough for one man without any executive work, but they reluctantly bow to the unanimous opinion of the naval officers that the consultative duties "could not, with advantage, be separated from some at least of the administrative duties which now devolve upon the First Naval Lord, which keep him in constant communication with the officers of the navy, and secure that he is fully informed of the opinions, requirements, and condition of the service." They therefore recommended, not that the First Naval Lord should be without practical duties, but that he should be relieved of all detail that could be equally well performed by one of the other Naval Lords.

Thus, in regard to the navy, the Commission was, though with difficulty, kept

within the bounds of sanity, and its recommendations, embodying just what all the leading spirits in the navy are agreed in thinking necessary, exactly mark the indispensable minimum of reform at the Admiralty upon which the public may safely insist.



## V

### PERSONS AND PRINCIPLES

IN discussing the guarantees which the public ought to demand for the strength and readiness of the navy, I have hitherto confined myself to the subject of the system to be adopted, and have urged the selection of a competent naval strategist, as war director of the navy, to submit to the Cabinet his plans for the composition, the distribution, and the movements of fleets in peace and in war, and to direct, under the authority of the Cabinet, the execution of these plans. I have tried to show that in the departmental organization which has become

inevitable at the Admiralty the principal department must needs be that of the strategist or war director, and have given reasons for my belief that if that officer's view of the requirements of war be formally laid before the Cabinet from time to time, those requirements will be met in the Estimates. As an additional guarantee, or rather as a means of enforcing the responsibility of the Cabinet, I have pointed out that the opinion of the Naval War Director might in some suitable form be rendered accessible to the House of Commons, and that in this way reality might be given to the constitutional doctrine that the Cabinet as a whole must answer to Parliament for the use it has made of its power.

The recent judgment of Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams on the liability of directors is not without bearing upon the duties of Cabinet Ministers. If the director of a

company is pecuniarily as well as morally responsible for helping, by his negligent acquiescence in a misleading statement, to gain the confidence of the shareholders for that statement, can it be held that a Cabinet Minister has fulfilled his trust if without thorough examination, such as any man would give to his own affairs, he acquiesces in the promulgation of Navy Estimates which will not leave the navy either strong enough or ready for a war ?

#### THE PERSONAL ELEMENT IN ADMINISTRATION.

Though I believe the system must be improved, I am not prepared to pin my faith merely to a system, however good. Government and administration depend largely upon the character and the personal qualities of the men charged with them. One of my correspondents, commenting on my

statement that "what we want is a naval Moltke," very pertinently asked, "Where will you get your Moltke?"

The answer is not that by any known machinery you can turn out and select a genius, but that the first duty of the Government is to select for every great post in the public service the man who, of all those available, is the best qualified for it, or, at least, to make sure that the officer appointed has the special attainments required.

No man can spend his life in the army or the navy and become a general or an admiral without his comrades becoming perfectly acquainted with his powers. If he is a very great man, but has had no great opportunities, his full strength may not be known; but there will never be any doubt about his general classification. He will be recognized as a man of first-rate capacity or as falling below that standard, and the specific bent of

his powers will in general be fairly appreciated. A man's comrades and superiors cannot always be sure that they know all that a particular man known to be able can do, but they seldom fail to know very well what a particular man not specially able cannot do. The duty of a Government is not so much to look for genius, which is a most delicate matter, as to prevent the selection for any post of a man known to be incapable of properly performing its functions.

Good government is seen less in the occasional selection of a brilliant officer than in the entire absence of incapable men from important posts. Of six men whose rank renders them eligible for an appointment it may be difficult to decide which of three is the best ; it is usually quite certain that one or two out of the other three is without the talents required. If, then, one of the

two incapables is put in to the exclusion of the three competent men, some one has been dishonest and some one has been weak ; and when such wrong appointments are common it is a sure sign of a slackness in the sense of duty of the Ministers in authority. It is necessary, therefore, to bear in mind that mere changes in system will not suffice, and that honesty in the choice of persons is always indispensable. At the same time we must not on that account refuse to amend the system, for the better the system the greater will be the scope for the rightly-chosen men.

### THE TRAINING AND SELECTION OF COMMANDERS.

The question of persons leads me to what is one of the most important features of a proper organization and one of the strongest

arguments for the particular reform which I advocate. It is probable that the admiral-commander's office would be the one office in the whole navy where a promising younger officer would be most likely to have his view of the nature of naval war enlarged and corrected, and therefore a good system would provide for passing through this office, in the intervals between their periods of sea service, the best of the younger men.

In this way not only would their training be facilitated, but the admiral-commander would in a few years have been able to spread his own ideas of the methods of war throughout the service. The future admirals in command of fleets would be familiar, from their occasional turns of duty at headquarters, with the principles upon which a war was to be fought. Each of the best of the younger officers would have his turn of

duty in the private office of an admiral-commander, and in this way not only would the very able men have very special training, but the war director would have the opportunity of gauging the powers of each one of them in regard to the more difficult problems of naval war. Thus the office of the admiral-commander would be the great school for the higher education of a picked group of naval officers. In short, the appointment of an admiral-commander is the shortest and surest way to secure that future Cabinets shall have a larger field for the selection of his successors than is open to a Cabinet at the present moment.

#### A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN OFFICE.

It is, perhaps, desirable to make clear that the changes I have proposed, though they are indispensable for the purpose of securing



the management of the navy with due regard on the one hand to the needs of a war, and on the other to the control which Parliament should exercise over expenditure, are yet not in any sense sweeping or destructive ; they merely carry out principles all of which are already admitted, though imperfectly worked out, in the Admiralty.

The foundation-stone is the elementary truth that a fighting organization must be framed with reference to the fighting for which it is intended, and that the Navy must therefore be administered in accordance with the conditions of the next war so far as they can be foreseen. This gives the primacy in the whole system to a Plan of Campaign office, and installs its director in the principal compartment of the central authority. In 1887, thanks to the action of Lord Charles Beresford, then Junior Naval Lord, an Intelligence Department was

created, under the direction of a captain. Its functions were to be "purely advisory." It was to study foreign navies, and keep strategical and statistical information ready to hand. "When directed" it was to prepare plans of campaign for the consideration of the Board, but it was never, unless asked, to make any suggestion as to strategical or administrative policy. This arrangement is a compromise of the worst kind. It involves the reluctant admission of a principle of which the necessary consequences are at the same time evaded.

A plan of campaign is not serious unless it is meant to be the basis of preparation and of action. To create an office which may or may not be called upon for a plan of campaign implies that you have not made up your mind whether you will make your preparations with a view to war or with a view to something else, whether they are to

be systematic or accidental. To forbid the office to suggest a policy is plainly to declare that though you may find it interesting to read a theoretical plan of campaign you have no intention of being guided by it; it is to be mere solemn trifling. To frame a plan of this sort a captain will do, with the assistance of a few officers junior to himself. I suppose Lord George Hamilton, who will pardon me if I describe him as the irresponsible authority who made this arrangement, has the dislike so common among Englishmen for thinking anything out to the end, and that therefore he did not attach any definite meaning to the words "plan of campaign." Perhaps, too, he was thinking of the House of Commons and not of war.

Suppose that Lord George Hamilton, instead of being forced to do something in order to postpone Lord Charles Beresford's

resignation and the possible consequences of that officer's telling the public what he had told the Government, had had an emergency to face. Suppose that Lord Salisbury had told him "I expect a war with a great Power in a few weeks; make your preparations." Does any one imagine that Lord George Hamilton would have sent for a captain in the navy and asked him for a plan of campaign? He would have gone to his First Sea Lord, or to any admiral whom he thought a better man, and having heard his views, would have taken him to the Cabinet and obtained for him full authority to carry them out at once. The admiral thus chosen would have gone at once to the Director of Naval Intelligence for precise information about the state and distribution of the expected enemy's naval forces. It is evident that if Lord George Hamilton had been in earnest he would in 1887 have put

this method into permanent working order, and have then arranged at leisure for all time that which the advent of war may some day compel one of his successors to arrange in haste. He would have selected an admiral as war commander, and have instructed the other admirals at his board to work to that admiral's design.

Another corner-stone is the principle—which flows from the elementary truth just discussed—that the officer who directs the movements of the fleet in peace should direct them in war, and should, therefore, be the sole constituted adviser of the Cabinet upon that subject—that is, upon the conduct of the naval defence of the Empire. With Lord Hartington's Commission in view, the Admiralty (that is, I believe, Lord George Hamilton) became aware that there was a doubt whether there was a constituted adviser on this subject. Nothing seemed

to Lord George Hamilton easier than to remedy the defect. He had merely to take the paper recording the distribution of business at the Admiralty, to turn to the page enumerating the twenty duties assigned to the First Sea Lord, and write upon it as a twenty-first, "Maritime defence and strategical questions—to advise," and to his mind the thing was done. Here is the list of the First Naval Lord's duties after Lord George Hamilton's improvements in 1888:—

1. Ships in Commission.
2. Distribution and Organization of the Fleet.
3. Maritime Defence and Strategical Questions—to advise.
4. Royal Marines and Royal Marine Artillery.
5. Appointments of Commanders under Captains.
6. General Supervision of Intelligence Department and of Mobilization of Fleet.
7. Complements of Ships.
8. Discipline.
9. Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry.

10. Punishment Returns.
11. Protection to Trade and Fisheries.
12. Hydrographical Department and Pilotage.
13. Signals.
14. Collisions.
15. Slave Trade.
16. Gunnery and Torpedoes—as relates to *personnel* and Ships in Commission.
17. Prize Questions.
18. Deserters, Rewards for apprehension of; Removals of R.
19. Leave to Officers and Men in Ships in Commission.
20. Naval Attachés, movements of and Orders to.
21. Uniform Regulations.

This is a terribly promiscuous list of duties for the officer upon whom rests the strategical direction of the navy in peace and war. It is based upon no classification. It does not correspond in any way with the division of business among the departments. There were at the same date twelve departments. The First Sea Lord was apparently at the head of none of them. The head of

the Naval Intelligence Department was, indeed, his subordinate ; but war operations, blockades, and defences were assigned to the Secretary, in the military branch of his office, which had twenty-two duties, some of which would and others would not be referred to the First Sea Lord.

It seems to me that if Lord George Hamilton had seriously intended to enable the First Sea Lord to direct the action of the navy in a war, under the authority of the Cabinet, he would have done more than add a fresh line to the list of twenty heterogeneous duties. I do not intend to make any detailed proposals, but as an illustration of the kind of reform I think a serious administrator would have introduced in 1888 I will give a rough sketch of what I think a naval commander's office or department might be :—



## THE NAVAL COMMANDER'S OFFICE

1. *Private Secretary's Office.*—

Correspondence with other departments of the Admiralty and with naval attachés of Foreign Powers. *Personnel* of the Naval Commander's department.

2. *Chief of the Staff's Office.*

Section I. Preparation of all orders to commanders of squadrons or of ships, to officer commanding Royal Marines, and to officers commanding naval bases (if under Admiralty). Communication with War Office and with Mercantile Marine. Manœuvres. (This is the section for design of operations—A, against enemy's fighting fleets; B, for protection of commerce; C, for protection of harbours.)

Section II. Mobilization (worked out in communication with other departments).

Section III. Director of Intelligence.

A. Foreign navies; British naval attachés.

B. Progress of (1) shipbuilding, (2) armament, (3) tactics.

### 3. *Naval Recorder's Office.*—

Naval history (records of all operations). Library. Communications with hydrographer's office.

It will be seen that this is a considerable office, involving a large staff of specially qualified naval officers. The commander himself has nothing to do except sign the orders and the memoranda of design for operations, for all of which he, and he alone, is responsible. They are his special duty,

and the whole great bureau is an extension of his person to enable him the better to perform it. Being thus able to concentrate himself he will be free, as the First Sea Lord of 1838 could never be, for the consideration of any question of principle as to which the head of any other department may wish to consult him. Take, for instance, a duty not enumerated in Lord George Hamilton's table, though it certainly devolved upon his First Sea Lord, that of recommending the speed and armament to be required from a ship about to be constructed. The commander's Intelligence Department (B) will be for this purpose a compartment of his mind. He will be familiar with the observations that have been made and the conclusions which have been drawn from them on this subject. Whenever a question comes to him from the head of any department (such questions will

always take the form, How will the proposed action of this department be related to the operations of war which you have in view?) he will have in his mind the data upon which to frame his reply.

Now this is meant only as an illustration. Other groupings of the work are possible, and I do not know how far the distribution of 1888 has since then been amended. But I do not gather that there has been any change in its spirit. The First Sea Lord is still responsible for a variety of unrelated subjects, and so far from being, as I believe he ought to be, the head of a great strategy department, he is a Jack-of-all-trades.

## VI

# NAVAL DISCIPLINE AND ADMINISTRATION — COÖPERATION WITH THE ARMY.

### DISCIPLINE.

I HAVE dwelt upon the function of an Admiral Commander to direct the movements of fleets or the operations of naval war, because this is the great determining function upon which success or failure depends. Soldiers or sailors have occasionally won a battle by sheer manliness in spite of an incapable commander. But no war was ever brought to a successful issue in this way. In the long run, and on a large scale, victory is with the higher intelligence, that is under

intelligence. The chaotic arrangement of the Board of Admiralty as revealed in the distribution of business of 1888 means DEFEAT. In order to reach an organization a beginning must be made somewhere, and there can be no doubt that the right end to begin at is the design of war operations. But the Admiral Commander ought scarcely to shut himself up to this sole duty. He should have charge of the discipline of the fleet.

Discipline in the true sense consists of putting the best man to lead, of which the result is that the others obey willingly, for healthy men love to be led by a man whom they feel to be their superior. In a narrower sense discipline is maintained by routine. There is a code of regulations to which all must conform. The danger is that weak persons in authority are apt to confuse the form with the substance, and to take the

modern conditions the better organized code of regulations for the essence of discipline, mistaking the means for the end and the letter for the spirit. A man devoid of judgment may so misuse lawful authority that without violating the letter of a military code he may arouse the spirit of disobedience among his subordinates. Discipline is then at war with itself, and the results are disastrous. But a man of fine judgment and high character may fulfil the spirit of an order by disobeying its forms. Nelson at St. Vincent rendered his Admiral the greatest possible service by a movement inconsistent with the terms of the Admiral's orders.

The perfection of discipline is seen in Nelson's fleet at the battle of the Nile, and what it consisted in cannot be better explained than in Nelson's own words. In his despatch to Lord St. Vincent he says :—

“Nothing could withstand the squadron your Lordship did me the honour to place under my command. Their high state of discipline is well known to you, *and with the judgment of the captains, together with their valour*, and that of the officers and men of every description, it was absolutely irresistible.”

Again, in a letter to Lord Howe, Nelson writes :—

“I had the happiness to command a band of brothers. . . . Each knew his duty. . . . I was enabled to throw what force I pleased on a few ships. *This plan my friends readily conceived by the signals.*”

Those who think that Nelson did not mean all that is implied in these words know little of great men. Assuredly he expressed his deep convictions when, in the passages



which I have put in italics, he laid stress on the judgment of his captains and their readiness to grasp the purport of his own designs. But the perfect harmony between a number of officers which is here described was rendered possible only by the character and attainments of Nelson himself. He was obeyed in the spirit as well as in the letter, because he had inspired all those about him with unlimited confidence in his own judgment.

It seems to me then that the Admiral Commander, selected by the Cabinet on the basis of their confidence in his character and his judgment, will be the proper person both to advise the Cabinet as to the scope of naval preparations for war and to maintain the discipline of the navy of which he directs the movements. He will endeavour to form the flag officers of the navy into just such a band of brothers as Nelson had in his

squadron in the Mediterranean. The confidence of his comrades at sea will be obtained by the judgment revealed in his orders, emanating from the staff office, concerning the movements of fleets and ships. In regard to the maintenance of discipline in the lower sense, the framing of regulations and the supervision of their observance, the Admiral Commander will be assisted by a second bureau or office, of which the head, subordinate to the Admiral Commander, will relieve him of all decisions but those of great weight and moment.

#### ADMINISTRATION.

The process of classification and subdivision of duties, by which I conceive that the First Sea Lord should be transformed or developed into an Admiral Commander, with two or three Admirals, his juniors, as his

subordinates at the head of the branches into which his duties will have been grouped, would lead also to the development of the office of Controller of the Navy (now held by the Third Sea Lord) into that of an Admiral Administrator, whose function will be to produce and maintain the navy which his colleague commands and directs. This office too would be organized into a few great branches with responsible heads.

The preparation and audit of accounts would be conducted in a third principal department under the supervision, as at present, of the Parliamentary Secretary.

It may be well to repeat that this sketch of a reorganized Admiralty is not meant as an absolute pattern, but merely as an illustration of principles.

## CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ARMY AND NAVY.

The acceptance of true principles in the arrangement of the business of the Admiralty will not, however, of itself suffice to secure the complete efficiency either of the navy or of the national defences. It is no doubt the matter of greatest urgency at the present time. But we shall do well always to bear in mind that defensive preparations are preparations for war, and in thinking of the navy we must always have an eye to the conditions of war.

The British Empire cannot be defended without the most perfect co-operation between the navy and the army. Military forces must help in the defence of the secondary naval bases beyond the sea. Military forces at home must by their readiness offer a reply to the threat of invasion, so that the conduct of naval operations will

not be unnecessarily hampered by fear of a sudden landing in the United Kingdom. When the navy has won its battles there may be scope for military operations outside the borders of British territory, but any operations required outside Great Britain from the military forces, before the superiority of the British fleets has been established, will be carried on under the disadvantage of precarious communications by sea. The work of Abercrombie, of Moore, and of Wellington, was founded on the success of Nelson and his comrades, and this must in the nature of the case ever be the true character of the relation between the British army and the British navy.

Co-operation implies division and distribution of work. It means that the different tasks of a war have been classified into those for which naval force and those for which military force are best suited, and that navy

and army have been prepared each for the services which they can best render. The task of the navy, assisted by military forces at its bases of operations, is to keep open the sea communications. If this is not accomplished the military forces of the Empire are so many isolated bodies destined to attempt, with the chances against them, the defence of a number of places far distant from one another, and unable to help one another. But if the sea communications are secure all the military forces of the Empire are available for action at any point in the whole theatre of war.

The British Empire maintains in the five continents military forces of various kinds, which, added together, have a total number of 950,000 men. With a beaten navy, and with even a navy which, though not beaten, fails to defeat the enemy's navy, these numerous forces are so many scattered

garrisons, none of which can be of more than local and temporary service to the Empire. But with a victorious navy these numbers are a reservoir sufficient to supply the military needs of any war that is in the least degree likely. They are, however, taken together, far more costly than the navy, and most of them can never be called upon to fight except in case of naval defeat. From an Imperial point of view it is perhaps not the best economy to maintain this very large military force, at least so long as there is a doubt whether the navy is strong enough to insure the communications between all parts of the Empire. The cause of this waste of resources lies in the lack of proper arrangements at headquarters for the due consideration of war, as something involving the joint action of both naval and military force.

How, then, can this general view of the

defence of the Empire be obtained, or rather, how can the nation secure a guarantee that its defensive preparations are based upon such a comprehensive survey of the probable requirements, and not upon accident or caprice ?

In the previous chapters the attempt has been made to show how this guarantee is to be had with regard to the naval requirements of a war. The same principles apply to the war duties of the army. A general Commander or Commander-in-Chief selected for war, and at his post during peace, assisted by a general staff, and responsible for command and discipline, for the design and execution of military operations, but not for the raising, maintenance and equipment of the army, would be the proper adviser of the Cabinet upon the military needs of the Empire.\*

\* I do not here enlarge upon the reform needed at



## AN AUTHORITY NEEDED TO SECURE CO-OPERATION.

Who, then, is to hold the balance between the Naval and the Military Commander? This is the question that lies at the root of the whole matter, for the right conduct of a war involves the correct employment in relation to one another of both navy and army, so that the real conductor and manager of the war is the authority who controls both the naval and the military commander. It may be well, before discussing the question, to satisfy ourselves that some such authority is essential. Upon this point we may note the differences of opinion which actually exist between the naval and the military schools of the War Office, because it has been fully explained, and the principles here set forth applied in detail to the management of the army by Sir Charles Dilke and myself in the 6th Chapter of our essay on Imperial Defence.

thought. They are almost absolutely at issue in regard to the use of fortification as a protection to the great naval bases at home. Military men have induced governments to spend large sums upon fortresses which naval men declare can never be of use so long as there is a fleet able to fight. One school of military teachers goes so far as to assert that the navy cannot be relied upon for defence, because the progress of invention makes it impossible to foresee what may happen in naval war. I do not think this view will bear close examination ; but it has been expressed by officers of high rank in the army, and proves conclusively that the difficulty exists of bringing naval and military views into harmony.

There is, perhaps, no need to do more, in proof of the need for an authority to control both services, than quote from the report of Lord Hartington's Commission :—

“The first point which strikes us in the consideration of the organization of these two great departments” (*i.e.*, the Navy and the Army) “is, that while in action they must be to a large extent dependent on each other, and while in some of the arrangements necessary as a preparation for war they are absolutely dependent on the assistance of each other, little or no attempt has ever been made to establish settled and regular inter-communication or relations between them, or to secure that the establishments of one service should be determined with any reference to the requirements of the other. . . . It has been stated in evidence before us that no combined plan of operations for the defence of the Empire in any given contingency has ever been worked out or decided upon by the two departments.”

## VII

### THE NAVY, THE ARMY, AND THE NATIONAL POLICY.

#### THE FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT IN REGARD TO DEFENCE.

THE supreme executive power alone can decide between the naval and the military commanders. In other words, it is for the Cabinet to hold the balance between its two advisers upon the conduct of war. Try how you will you cannot devise any method by which the Cabinet can be relieved of this responsibility. Mr. Balfour indeed would give it to a Committee of the Cabinet, but that is only another way of saying that he

thinks the Cabinet unsuited for its work, and would give its power to a smaller body. He proposes a mild revolution, by which the large committee now called the Cabinet shall be superseded by a smaller one without a distinctive name. Call it by what name you will, the power that decides between the naval and military commanders, and thereby settles the nature of a war, is the government of the country. The objection to Mr. Balfour's scheme is that it would divorce authority from responsibility ; the large Cabinet without power would be responsible to Parliament for the acts of the small committee. Under any practicable plan the great decisions will always rest with a committee of politicians of which the Prime Minister will be the Chairman, exercising a preponderant influence. This is an arrangement we need not criticize ; we must take it as we find it, unless we are to re-

build the Constitution, which would be hardly the right way to secure what we want, the speedy efficiency of the defences of the Empire. Indeed, an arrangement better for our purpose than that of the supremacy of the Cabinet would be hard to invent, for between two professional men, each selected as the best in his own branch, it is impossible to get a third professional man to decide ; the judgment must lie with instructed common sense, of which the Cabinet, advised by the most competent admiral and general, may be reasonably taken as the type.

### ITS TOO LONG NEGLECT.

Unfortunately the Cabinet does not do its work. It is the first duty of the Cabinet to provide for the defence of Great Britain and the Empire. I am ashamed to repeat

so elementary and incontrovertible a statement, but it is absolutely necessary to do so in order to appreciate the fact stated by Lord Hartington's Commission, that "No combined plan of operations for the defence of the Empire in any given contingency had ever been worked out by the two departments." Does it not follow that during the period covered by this report no Government had ever considered the defence of the Empire; no Cabinet ever inquired what were the arrangements contemplated for the event of a war? In a word, does not the report prove that for many years every Cabinet, without exception, had neglected its first duty to the nation?

My purpose in writing these chapters is simply to induce my countrymen to compel the Cabinet to do its duty. With this object I suggest first of all that the Cabinet shall be provided with the best professional advice,

naval and military ; and that it shall be required to consider this advice before submitting estimates for the army and navy to the House of Commons. These two results will be secured if the House of Commons calls for the names of the two advisers, and for the substance of their opinions to be laid before it along with the estimates. I do not for a moment suppose that a Cabinet with a competent professional opinion before it will ignore or over-rule that opinion. On the contrary, once obliged to consider the question of defence in all its breadth the Cabinet will come to a sound conclusion, which it will confidently submit to the judgment of Parliament. The professional advisers will derive the greatest advantage from the discussions of the Cabinet, and will find means, as they have not yet done, of coming to an understanding with each other as to the scope of the services which they



severally represent. The House of Commons will vote the estimates with its eyes open, and the country will be free from the alarms and agitations that have arisen with such disagreeable frequency in recent years.

Even this, however, is only the smaller part of the consequences to be expected from a rational organization. The Cabinet cannot sit down to consider the real conditions of possible wars, and the indispensable requirements of national and imperial defence, without its members being led to reflect a little upon the meaning of war and its relation to the rest of their functions.

#### THE CONSEQUENCE—A WEAK DIPLOMACY.

The facts I have already stated prove that at no time within the knowledge of Lord Hartington's Commission has the country

been ready for war. That is the sufficient explanation of the helplessness of British diplomacy for the last twelve years, and of the weakness of what has been miscalled the foreign policy of the last six administrations. On almost every occasion when a Ministry has declared its will in regard to any matter at issue with a great Power it has ended with submission to the will of the other Power.

Having informed Germany that we would not tolerate the settlement of another European Power on the West Coast, north of the Cape, we apologised and withdrew as soon as the German flag was hoisted in the area in question. We allowed Germany to elbow us out of Zanzibar, and then, in order partially to recover our position there, we gave Germany Heligoland and abandoned our friends and protégés, the Malagasy, to the French. We allowed the Germans, in spite

of a formal agreement, to annex a piece of New Guinea to which they had no claim beyond the wish to have it, thereby offending our own Australian Colonists. We have permitted the French to push us down the Niger and to take the "backland" of our colonies in North-West Africa; to attack our troops in our own recognized sphere of influence; to annex a portion of Siam; to raise endless questions which we all believe to be absolutely unfounded in right, with regard to the Newfoundland shores; and to cavil at our continuance in the occupation of Egypt, while they remain and intend to remain in occupation of Tunis. We have allowed Russia to move her frontier up to the border of Afghanistan, to invade Afghan territory and to push back the Amcer's frontier. We are even said to have come to an agreement with Russia in regard to the dispute between China and Japan,

although it was our obvious interest to side with Japan in resisting any advance of the Russian frontier in Manchuria or towards Korea.

The explanation of all these retreats is quite plain. Each Cabinet in succession has been afraid to say No, either to Germany, to France, or to Russia, merely because they thought that to say no might have led to a war. Each of the three foreign Governments has perceived that the British Government was afraid, and each of them has made the most of that knowledge. Our Governments are bullied because they are evidently in terror of a quarrel. This process will go on so long as Cabinets are allowed to neglect the nation's affairs and to devote themselves solely to the retention of office and the glorification of their own party. Is it any wonder that trade has been depressed all these years, when every year has seen a market closed

to us by the process of hoisting a foreign flag over the heads of our traders ?

### A BRITISH POLICY.

The question of the future is not whether this abject conduct of the national policy shall cease. Assuredly it will cease as soon as the nation perceives its real nature. The question is whether it is to be stopped by the national feeling suddenly refusing to endorse some further humiliating diplomatic surrender—which would precipitate a war whether we were ready or not—or by Cabinets giving their attention to defence, setting the navy and the army in order, and then, realizing that Great Britain is still the first of the great Powers, acquiring the courage to conduct their diplomacy according to good sense, to concede without controversy unimportant trifles, and boldly to

refuse to discuss the surrender of undoubted rights or established interests.

A consistent fearless policy, accompanied by or rather based upon effective naval and military preparation, will be the best course for the preservation not only of the Empire but of peace. For Great Britain wisely led, and therefore supported by her colonies, is yet the strongest Power in Europe, perhaps in the world. If she is united and determined, and her defences are ready, no Power will lightly pick a quarrel with her, and a judicious diplomacy will find her allies. I am no believer in treaties of alliance. Nations go to war not because of treaties and paper promises, but in pursuance of their own ends. The ally upon whom you can rely is the nation which in its own interests and for its own purposes must needs be opposed to the enemies who confront you, and which may hope to win with your co-

operation, but not without it. In such a case no treaty is necessary. If you act the other Power will join you, and the enemy knowing this will be slow to quarrel with either of you.

Nations do not conduct their affairs upon sentimental, but upon business lines, and there can be no greater delusion than that of too many humanitarian politicians, who imagine that alliances can be built upon sympathy or upon community of political creed. I have watched for years, during which I have paid repeated visits to France and Germany, the growth of French and German hostility to this country. But for years I have been reviled by my Liberal friends as a Tory, because I have urged them to observe the hostile feeling in France, incredible to them because inconsistent with their dreams, and by my Unionist friends as a Radical, because I have pointed out that

the German Government, with which they would like this country to be allied, carries on among its own people a systematic propaganda of hatred to England. Would it not be well for the country and for our political life if for a time we could all of us forget that we are, or were a few years ago, Liberals and Conservatives, and could remember, what after all is more important, that we are fellow-citizens of the same nation, and partners in the same Empire?

We should then, perhaps, more fully realize that the greatness of England—of Great and Greater Britain—rests in the last resort upon the manliness of her people, and that the charter of our national liberties as well as the foundation of our Empire is the power of the British navy to assert and to retain the command of the sea.



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